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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in a major United States city which was under a court order to desegregate its schools. The school district responded by establishing a series of magnet schools. This method was designed to bring whites voluntarily into movement for desegregation. Three middle schools were studied to assess the relationship between teachers and principals as the administrators worked to get teachers to follow school innovations. Ethnographic methods were shown to be important in examining aspects of this relationship. The studies indicated that a bureaucratic or rational model of organization has currency among organizational theorists as well as legislators, the public, and educational administrators. Subordinates responded to commands passed down the hierarchy of educational organizations with considerable independence when innovative programs were being implemented. The ways in which ethnographic studies have been important in showing the manner in which actual practice in organizations differs from the rational model are illustrated. (DWH)

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Symposium on the Uses of Ethnography to Extend Theory

ETHNOGRAPHY, ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY, AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

by

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 27, 1984.

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Ethnography, Organizational Theory, and Educational Innovation

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Schools are formal organizations. As such they belong in a category with large corporations, government agencies, the Catholic Church, hospitals, the YMCA and the local health food coop. Sociologists have developed theories about common elements in the functioning of all formal organizations. The main stream of this theoretical analysis considers their bureaucratic characteristics as central. Bureaucracy is a neutral term for sociologists. It implies a clear division of labor and hierarchy which can be represented on an organizational chart. Goals are set and decisions made at the top. They are carried into action through commands passed down the line, and accountability passed up the line. This model of organizational functioning is often referred to as a "rational" one.[1]

Such a rational model of organizational functioning has long been dominant in organizational theory. In the last ten years, however, it has not only been questioned, but other models have gained acceptance as alternatives; its importance and even its viability have been seriously challenged. One competing model has described some organizations as "loosely coupled", consisting of units which operate with significant independence even though they may stand in a formal relationship of hierarchy. There may be an equally loose tie between the goals proclaimed by each unit, or the whole organization, and the activities regularly engaged in, supposedly in pursuit of those goals (Weick, 1976). Another model is that of an anarchy. It assumes that organizations are loosely coupled but sees them as constituted not out of loosely connected subunits but rather out of the actions of individuals pursuing individual interests which are only partially shaped by the duties associated with their organizational roles (March and Olsen, 1976). A third sees organizations as resembling miniature political systems. Individuals pursuing either organizationally or individually based interests form temporary group alliances and coalitions of group alliances to further their goals within the organization (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980).[2] These alternative models have by now gained considerable recognition in the sociological study of organizations and among persons interested in its relevance to the study of schools (Firestone, 1980) or

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1. Though there are other distinguishing characteristics of a bureaucracy or a rational model of organizational functioning, these are the ones on which I will concentrate.

2. I have summarized the alternative models most relevant to the internal functioning of schools from the perspective I want to take today. There are other models which concentrate upon the relations of organizations to the whole society and upon the details of face to face interactions within organizations as well (Benson, 1977; Zey-Ferrell and Aiken, 1981).

agencies working with people in general (Elmore, 1978).

These alternative views of action within organizations describe behavior which is not officially legitimate, and which therefore does not invite public recognition or discussion. Such behavior is most easily discovered and explored with methods which involve observation and open-ended interviews which elicit descriptions of events and allow the interviewer to probe for details and for perceived motives not only of the interviewee but of others with whom he or she has to deal.

The long dominance of a rational model of organization is related to the dominance of quantitative methods. Large quantitative studies must rely on easily gathered measures of input and output, on short uncomplicated responses to questionnaires, or on closed-ended interviews. The former bypass process and the meaning of events and the latter are often answered by persons high on organizational charts who have a stake in believing in their own hierarchical efficacy.

There were respected qualitative case studies which described the processes now being highlighted in the questioning of the rational model as early as the late 1940s and 1950s (e.g. Blau, 1963; Gouldner, 1954; Selznick, 1949). While these are part of the literature in the study of organizations, they had less impact on later theory and the design of later studies than one would expect because they dealt with the kinds of informal practices which can best be studied through ethnographic methods. Empirical work which has supported the recent change in theoretical orientation has been largely based in case studies, though not all of these were detailed enough to be considered genuinely ethnographic (e.g. Dornbusch and Scott, 1975; March and Olsen, 1976).

It has been clear for quite some time that schools in particular did not fit the rational model of organizations. Bidwell's (1965) classic review of the literature on schools as organizations made this quite clear in the relations of central offices and schools and of principals and teachers as well as those of teachers and students. Schools have multiple and vaguely defined goals and an uncertain and non-standardized technology, both characteristics which make the assumptions of a rational model of organization fit especially poorly. This point was made by Bidwell and explored at some length by various authors concerned with schools in the sixties and seventies (Dreeben, 1973; Lortie, 1975). Not surprisingly the literature which Bidwell reviewed in 1965 was much thinner than the literature on other organizations in the same collection of reviews of literature on organizations. In some other kinds of organizations the rational model is at least more applicable; sociologists using a rational model preferred to study such organizations and avoided the study of schools. As the rational model began to be questioned, organizational theorists have become much more interested in schools or at least in educational organizations (Dornbusch and Scott, 1975; March and Olsen, 1976; Weick, 1976).

However, a major impetus for exploration of the organizational character of schools came as a byproduct of two unrelated lines of research with outcomes which violated educators' common sense and presented likely unpleasant political and fiscal consequences. First, the Coleman report (1966) and later research by Jencks (1972) was interpreted to mean that schools don't make a difference to

students' experiences, a perspective which violated educators' common sense. Second, and most relevant for this paper, evaluations of federal and foundation initiatives for school innovations started in the sixties found depressingly little effect on students as a result. Gradually, the idea took hold that the problem might not be in the impact of new school practice on children but in the impact of innovative efforts in changing actual school practice (Farrar, Cohen, and DeSanctis, 1980; McLaughlin, 1978). Therefore a spate of studies were undertaken to look at the process of implementing innovations and, with varying degrees of self-consciousness and sophistication, at the functioning of organizations which is interwoven with the innovation process (Berman and McLaughlin, 1975; Cusick, 1983; Deal and Nutt, 1983; Firestone, 1981; Herriott and Gross, 1979; Sarason, 1971; Smith et al. 1981; Sproull, Weiner, and Wolf, 1978; Sussmann, 1977; Wolcott, 1977). These studies have involved case studies as they sought to uncover behavior which was not officially sanctioned and to study process as well as structure.

These studies found, over and over, in contexts varying from federal education agencies to school districts to individual schools that the public, and to a degree administrators along with them, believed in the reality of a rational or bureaucratic model of organization. Federal innovators and local administrators assumed that decisions were made at the top and followed out down the line with little problematic in the process as long as administrators at each level were competent and followers responsible in doing their duty. The studies also found that this view of organizational life is far too simple. Instead administrators and teachers as a whole and in subgroups act on their entrenched interests in activities and relationships which enhance their prestige, facilitate their work, or express their educational philosophies. Administrators at the top generally plan innovations to be consistent with their own interests, but often act without regard for the interests of teachers or lower administrators who will consequently resist the innovation either overtly or covertly. This resistance may be based in deep moral conviction about the kinds of activities children need; it may be based in far more self-centered concerns, such as the prestige associated with the activities requested, or it may stem from practical matters such as logistical inconveniences new activities entail.

Two general lessons may be drawn from these studies. First, a bureaucratic or rational model of organization has currency not only among organizational theorists but among legislators and the public, on the one hand, and among educational administrators on the other. In short, it has public legitimacy as a model of organizational functioning. Departures from it tend to be seen as illegitimate malfunctions rather than as predictable and even healthy manifestations of active participation by subordinates. Second, this literature shows that subordinates will respond to commands passed down the hierarchy of educational organizations with considerable independence. This is particularly true of commands for innovation because these are not routine; they disrupt established procedures and relationships. This literature suggests that subordinates' resistance to innovation may be based in the requirements of the educational roles individuals play, in shared perspectives of whole groups of teachers or administrators, or in the individual needs of participants.

In the rest of this paper, I will give a very brief summary of a study of three "magnet" schools, innovative schools set up to attract volunteers for desegregation.

I will attempt to show how a detailed ethnographic study of these schools revealed processes which indicated the limits of the practical impact of a rational model of organization in schools and some of the predictable processes which set those limits. The argument given here is the result of reflection on the processes observed in the schools. The data on which the observations rest are far too extensive to include in a paper of this length. I will therefore have to ask the reader to trust the accuracy of my summaries for this morning's argument, though there are other sources where the data on which they are based are available (Metz, 1982, 1983, 1984, forthcoming).

THE CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study was done in the city of "Heartland", a pseudonym for one of the thirty largest cities in the United States. Heartland responded to a court order to desegregate its schools with a plan which included a series of magnet schools, designed to bring whites voluntarily into movement for desegregation. The three magnet schools studied here were three middle schools serving sixth through eighth graders which drew their students on a voluntary basis from throughout the city. Each school had a different special educational approach. The first, Adams Avenue, offered Individually Guided Education, generally called IGE. The second, Horace Mann, offered a program for gifted and talented students who were nominated by their teachers as well as volunteered by their parents. The third, Jesse Owens, offered open education. For the first years of the desegregation plan these three middle schools were the magnet schools available to children of that age from every part of the city.

Heartland's powerful teachers' union successfully blocked the central office's desire to choose the teachers for the magnet schools. As a consequence, most of the magnets, among them all of those discussed here, were staffed with the teachers who had taught in the programs previously housed in the buildings in which the magnets were located. While all teachers were offered the opportunity to leave, doing so meant losing building seniority which was an important protection against layoff or further involuntary transfer and it meant accepting assignment at some unknown school. Consequently, the building staffs remained virtually intact and the magnet schools were thus created in established schools with established staffs. This is then not a study of the creation of new schools but of the transformation of old schools—with one exception. Jesse Owens Open Education school had been a special school with citywide voluntary recruitment and racial quotas for admission before the magnet plan went into effect. It had taken on this form on the initiative of building staff. Its story with regard to matters of hierarchy is consequently different from that of the other two schools and it will be treated separately.

Adams Avenue IGE school and Horace Mann school for the gifted and talented were established in the first and second years of desegregation, respectively. Each faculty had previously served a student body of black students from low income families. With the coming of desegregation each was transformed over a summer into a magnet school. Heartland's desegregation plan depended heavily on its magnet schools, hence central office pressure for success and media and public

attention were intense. The schools needed to display the special characteristics which were advertised to volunteering parents in visible ways and to become immediately and obviously "successful".

Given both the physical isolation of each school building and the allocation of responsibilities in the formal organizational chart of school districts, principals were given the official responsibility for seeing that these goals became a reality. The principals did not have time to discuss the possibilities for program with their teachers or even to persuade them of the virtues of the administration's planned program before school opened and the plan was to be put in place. Rather, events pressed them into using the formal powers of their office to order the teachers to follow the plan for the school as it had been conceived elsewhere.

While this behavior is simply that formally expected of any bureaucratic superordinate, it was strikingly visible in these schools because schools have an informal and weak but nonetheless real recognition of the special position of teachers as professionals as well as subordinates (Bidwell, 1965; Dreeben, 1973; Lortie, 1975). Organizations staffed by full professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and university faculty have long been recognized as departing from traditional patterns of hierarchy as these persons are considered to have expert knowledge and to work with problems which do not lend themselves to standardized solutions. Sociologists have recently noted that organizations with less educated workers which have technical processes which require the application of non-routine solutions to non-standard problems also allow their workers considerable autonomy (Perrow, 1967). Many organizations which work with people fall in this category. Lipsky (1980) has spoken of informal discretion used by "street-level" bureaucrats, persons working within public bureaucracies who must make fateful decisions for others whose situations are not standardized. Manning (1977) has traced in detail the unofficial autonomy of the police in an organization which is formally as hierarchical and formal as the military, and Donald Metz (1981) has described the autonomy of Emergency Medical Technicians who staff ambulances despite their brief technical training and their low position in the medical hierarchy.

Teachers, often spoken of as semi-professionals, have some weak claims to autonomy on the basis of their expertise, especially in the secondary school where they teach particular subjects of which a principal may have special knowledge. They also have unofficial claims to autonomy as they apply methods which do not guarantee predictable outcomes to situations which are not standardized. Formally American school systems do not allow autonomy for teachers. There is a clear hierarchy with principals over teachers; principals are able to give them commands and are held accountable for their performance.[3] In practice, however, teachers are almost always given informal autonomy over activities in the classroom by their principals and they are sometimes given considerable informal power in making decisions for the school as a whole. The degree of autonomy and of collective voice in decisions varies from school system to school system and within

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3. In larger districts this pattern may be slightly complicated by the presence of curriculum specialists in the central office who have some authority over the curriculum teachers use.

each system from school to school as principals and teachers work out a way of working together.[4] Nonetheless, teachers' claims to "professionalism" and the tradition of a social as well as physical inviolability in the closed classroom door are present in some form throughout American public schools.

Consequently, Heartland's principals violated custom in using their formal bureaucratic powers to demand immediate changes in teachers' classroom practice as they responded to the requirements of the place of magnet schools in court-ordered desegregation and to the pressures to win quick public approval. Teachers' claims to limited professionalism were set aside as principals told them they must follow the patterns described for each school or ask for a transfer. The informal autonomy symbolized by the closed classroom door with its loose coupling to other classrooms or the principal's office was also undercut. At the same time, the principals' actions were completely legitimate as they were acting according to the formal structure of the school system. They also acted in clear consistency with the wishes of the superintendent and the publicly proclaimed policy of the district to establish magnet schools in insisting that this school must use a particular approach. If one follows a rational model, the changes planned by the superintendent and persons under him in the central office for the schools should have been accepted by the principals and the principals, acting with full legitimacy, should have been able to see that they were put into action in the schools.

PURPOSES AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

This study was designed in 1977-1978 and started in January 1979. At that time much of the theoretical background given here was available in the literature. Some of it appeared during the course of the study but was available during the analysis. The study was designed with the assumption that, as in other settings, the innovations for each school would be incompletely implemented. The question asked therefore did not concern whether the schools offered the programs they said they would, but rather more broadly what kinds of experiences they did offer their students, and why. The innovation was expected to play some part in the program offered and in the constellation of influences shaping the staff's behavior.

In this paper I will concentrate on what was learned of relations between the teachers and the principals as the principals worked to get the teachers to follow the innovations. Since the theme of this symposium is the contribution of ethnography to the development of theory, I will attempt to show why ethnographic methods were important to discovering aspects of this relationship which are not well-covered by previous theories.

I studied each of the three schools for approximately a semester, working alone. I was present at Adams Avenue two to three and occasionally four days a week from January to June of 1979. I attended parent meetings at Mann from the spring of 1979 through the 1979-1980 school year. I was present in the school one

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4. Analysts also differ over its extent and significance (Corwin, 1981).

day a week from September through December of 1979, concentrating on the sixth graders as they became oriented to the school, but also talking with faculty and attending faculty meetings. I worked intersively at Mann with the seventh and eighth grade classes and teachers from March through June of 1980. At Jesse Owens I was present two or three days a week from September through March of 1979-1980.

At each school I followed students through a full day of classes and visited other classes after asking the teachers' permission. I interviewed teachers, students, administrators and ancillary personnel, and a few parents at each school. In the summer of 1981, I interviewed curriculum supervisors and higher administrative personnel at the central office, as well as persons whose jobs dealt with magnet schools in particular. At each school I attended faculty meetings, team meetings of teachers, parent meetings, and student council meetings. I shadowed principals for one or two days. And I spent time talking informally with teachers and administrators over lunch, in the teachers' lounge, in administrative offices, and in the halls. I also was able to observe activities and conversations in these settings. I have shown earlier writings to the principals of the schools and discussed them with them. At Adams I also discussed an oral summary of the first paper I wrote with each of the teaching teams. These discussions have provided further perspective on the issues at hand and some knowledge of the continuing development of the schools.

HIERARCHY IN ACTION IN THE HEARTLAND SCHOOLS

I started the study with a concentration on the faculty, attempting to learn what they actually did with and for children, and why. Principals were important as articulators and leaders of the mission and practice of the school. It was only gradually that relations between teachers and principals per se emerged as one of the themes of the study. Teachers at each school displayed some behavior and attitudes toward the principals which seemed puzzling. As I got more distance from the data and was more able to compare the schools without being blinded by detail, I began to see patterns of similarity and difference between the schools which suggested interpretations of these puzzles. In each case in order to emerge with the interpretations summarized here I have had to go beyond teachers' or principals' explicit statements and to pay attention to the language they used and to patterns in the positions, affiliations and behavior of persons who shared or failed to share opinions. This kind of analysis relies upon an accumulation of knowledge about individuals' philosophies, activities, and alliances, and about the character of discourse and action in the shared social life of the school which can only be gathered through ethnographic methods. Yet knowledge of this kind seems crucial both to the building of theory and to a practical understanding of how organizations work.

There emerged clear similarities in relations between the principals and the teachers at Adams Avenue and Horace Mann schools, the two schools where principals were responsible for introducing an innovation and insisting on its implementation on short notice. There was also a clear difference between the relationship developed between the principals and teachers at these schools and that

at Jesse Owens where the principal, curriculum co-ordinator, and teachers together had developed the innovation some time earlier.

Principal-Teacher Relations at Adams and Mann

At Adams and Mann the principals were described by some teachers as peremptory in their dealings with teachers both as a group and individually. They were described as demanding compliance with the innovation and with school procedures. Teachers expressed annoyance that they showed little consideration for the practical and logistical difficulties which teachers had to face as they tried to institute new methods on short notice without adequate materials and/or facilities. These teachers spoke of feeling demeaned as they dealt with the principals. They said they were not taken seriously as they experienced or expressed difficulties in dealing with the principals' new demands but were simply told to do as the new patterns demanded or to ask for a transfer to another school. They felt they were not valued for the efforts they made but were expendable parts which could be discarded if they did not work well for the program.[5] The teachers who spoke this way did not question the principal's right to act as he or she did, their complaint was that the behavior made it difficult for them to feel comfortable or valued in the position of teacher.

These comments by teachers were not hard to interpret. It seemed that as principals were faced with the task of obtaining compliance immediately, they simply used the full force of the legitimacy of their hierarchical office to demand compliance and they used all the coercive sanctions available to them, in threat or in actuality to elicit compliance. (Further, though their superiors in the central office expected the magnet schools to function as advertised immediately, they could not prevent a good many practical snarls with supplies and other resources which teachers tended to hold principals responsible for.) It was predictable that teachers who were used to some de facto autonomy in the manner in which they taught their classes and to a stable reasonably smoothly run context should feel that they were facing adversity and were not appreciated as they struggled with it.

Legitimacy as a Source of Authoritative Control. Less predictable was the presence of groups at each school who criticized the principals in a truly virulent manner. They were acrid and personal in the terms of their criticism and seemed to take a delight in coming up with examples of apparently inept or perverse behavior on the part of a principal. While it seemed to an outsider that there was a basis in the principals' actions for some of their complaints, the teachers' reaction seemed greatly exaggerated and couched in unnecessarily derogatory terms.

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5. The form of these complaints varied somewhat from school to school. This is a composite description.

It seemed to me at first that these teachers were responding directly to an increase in the principals' assumption of a hierarchical and coercive stance, just as the first group of teachers were. But a close reading of their interview transcripts revealed an interesting discrepancy between the comments of these teachers at both schools and those of the first group at both schools. Where the first group explicitly mentioned the principals' strong control over their actions and (in some cases) their feeling of being belittled, the second group never mentioned either the principal's strong control over them or that they felt personally unappreciated. Instead, they complained about what they described as the principal's weak control over other teachers or over the students. They also recited a long litany of actions which they felt undercut the efficacy of their teaching, of the program, or of discipline of the student body as a whole.

At each school this group expressed the most anger, yet it did not complain about what seemed to be the obvious reason for anger, an assumption of greater hierarchical direction and distance than teachers ordinarily experience from principals and the threat or use of coercive sanctions to back it up. Why did they not complain about the principal's greater control and their own loss of control when others who were less angry did? Why did they not complain about this obvious change which was corrosive of their dignity and the source of an increase in the difficulty of their daily tasks?

The answer seemed obvious once found. These teachers recognized as did the first group that the principals were acting legitimately in terms of the formal definition of principal-teacher relations. Much as the teachers might feel belittled, they could not mount a principled objection to the principals' new use of the formal power which is always officially theirs, even if usually restrained in practice by custom and tradition. Consequently in order to build an argument that they could legitimately ignore or oppose the principal's orders they had to show that the principal's commands were illegitimate because of the way he or she used authority. This they did by attempting to show that however legitimate the claims of the office might be, this principal was personally incompetent and therefore his or her claim to direct their activity was invalid.[6] Only in that light could they legitimately ignore the principal's commands and legitimately actively oppose him or her. With this claim that the principal was incompetent and consequently had a weakened right to legitimate control, they could also encourage others to join them in this course.

If my interpretation here is correct, it tells us something about the place of bureaucratic hierarchy in a school, and presumably in other organizations as well.

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6. I was brought to this insight partly by an earlier study (Metz, 1978) of classroom authority where I had attempted to analyze students' challenges to their teachers' authority in classroom interaction. In that study, students tested teachers' competence both in academic matters (if they were academically self-confident) and in matters of discipline. The teacher who was not competent in one or both areas was deauthorized and was cheerfully teased or ignored, though not always disliked.

A crucial part of the power of the superordinates in a hierarchy inheres in the legitimacy of the bureaucratic hierarchical pattern. The public belief in the inevitability and efficacy of bureaucratic hierarchy is not simply naivete, but in fact constitutes a powerful social force which gives that hierarchy a good portion of its real power. The first group of teachers at each school might feel misused and deprived in their relations with the principal, but they also felt obligated to make at least a minimal effort to do as they were directed to. In short, the analytical relevance and the practical efficacy of a rational model of organizational functioning depend upon continuing belief in its legitimacy and effectiveness among the public and among members of organizations.

This example also tells us, however, that if bureaucratic hierarchy gathers force from its legitimacy, opposition to control through the hierarchy may well take devious and hidden forms. The challenge to bureaucratic control is unlikely to be open, explicit, and principled precisely because bureaucratic superordinates already have control of the high ground of principle through the legitimacy of their offices. Opposition which is not open and explicit is most easily studied through methods which observe actions or analyze long spontaneous statements rather than merely recording formal statements in interviews or on questionnaires.

Development of Political Coalitions for Resistance. Opponents of the principals at Adams and Mann were not content to voice their criticisms of the principals in interviews with a neutral outsider. They actively garnered support for their point of view from others related to the organization. At Adams the two leaders of this faction had by turns held the position of Building Representative for the teachers' union and had been on the union Building Committee. It is the responsibility of this committee to gather complaints that teachers may have about administrative policy or practice before monthly meetings with the principal where these complaints can be presented for administrative consideration without being attached to the names of individual teachers. The leader of this faction took this responsibility particularly to heart. It allowed him to learn of all the complaints any teachers had about the principal and to discuss them with other teachers, thus enabling him to suggest sources of discontent to teachers who might not spontaneously have thought much about them. The position thus provided a wonderful base for building a coalition of opposition to the principal, while simply fulfilling a union responsibility in an apparently civic-minded fashion.

According to other teachers the major leader of this faction also found informal opportunities to talk with small groups to spread his interpretation of the principal's behavior. It was clear that discontent with the principal was greatest in the department and team which had the most contact with this teacher (and also with the second leader of the faction who had the same contacts as the first). This behavior seemed a clear example of political coalition building, although it was not directed at a specific decision—unless as some evidence suggested the leader had a plan to build a crisis which would allow the faculty to request that the central office remove the principal. For reasons discussed below, this faction never became a majority in the school, and after the union lost an appeal of a teacher whom the principal had transferred involuntarily for not teaching according to the innovation, the leader of the faction was the one to leave the school.

At Mann, the union was very weak. There was no Building Committee or

Building Representative. The dissident faction had ties of affinity in department affiliation, ethnicity, age, and gender which had presumably spread a common view among persons who had some significantly different practices as teachers but who associated closely with one another. The core adherent of the perspective were in a single department composed completely of white men who proclaimed they had been close as a social group for ten years. Other members of the faction were mostly white men who had had long standing friendly relations with members of this group. The dissident faction also developed support through recruiting new teachers with whom they had contact through team membership, department membership, or shared travel to and from school. There was scattered evidence that some of them also tried to enlist the support of parents for their point of view, but this was done extremely quietly since alliances with parents which include criticism of any other staff member are traditionally considered highly illegitimate by teachers and administrators alike. In any case, in a less aggressive way than at Adams, the larger faction of discontented teachers at Mann attempted to recruit new members. Because there was an expectation that the school would soon be moved to another building with other administrators, the agenda of these dissidents was more one of justifying their noncooperation with the current administrators than of lobbying for their removal.

In both these cases we can see that persons who felt most injured by the strong exercise of power by administrators did not merely complain of their lot or attempt quiet noncompliance. Rather, they actively sought to make common cause with other persons to oppose the administrators' control over them. This behavior reminds one of the political model of organizational functioning described by Bacharach and Lawler (1980) and others. However none of these teachers said anything explicit about such recruitment in their interviews and there is a good chance they would have denied it if it had been described to them in the bald form given here. It was after all in a sense sedition against persons legitimately in control of the organization.

Once again, a researcher can learn about such matters only by talking to many persons at some length and observing their behavior. To make interpretations the researcher must notice the social location of speakers and the language they use as well as what they explicitly say and do. Consistent patterns of speech or behavior and their relation to formal and informal social locations are as important as the content of individual statements or acts. These patterns are only visible after some time spent in an organization and they can only be perceived after one learns of its informal as well as its formal structures.

Faculty Culture. So far I have spoken of similarities between principal-teacher relations at Adams and at Mann, but there were also differences. The reasons for these differences were embedded in shared perspectives toward the nature of the teaching task and toward the meaning of being a good or effective teacher which developed differently at the two schools. Early qualitative studies of organizations in sociology spoke of the development of a shared perspective on the work which constituted an organizational culture, or a subculture of some part of the organization (Blau, 1963; Gouldner, 1954; Lipset, Trow and Coleman, 1956). Such a subculture may be spontaneously developed from the working conditions or the common background of workers or it may be intentionally fostered (Clark, 1972; Selznick, 1957). Persons with a practical concern for managing organizations have

currently become very aware of such subcultures in the form that is intentionally developed and officially supported (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Pascale and Athos, 1981; Peters and Waterman, 1982). Anthropologists have paid some attention, though not a great deal, to such small cultures which grow up in particular contexts within a larger culture(Goodenough, 1978).

The difference in teachers' response to the hierarchical efforts of the principals at Adams and at Mann seemed to be related to the different faculty cultures the two schools had developed. At Adams the teachers had developed a faculty culture which seemed to be unusual in comparison to that at other schools I had studied and at schools described in the literature which serve large proportions of economically poor and low achieving students. (See Metz, 1983 for a fuller discussion.) The teachers took pride in the good relations they established with students and unselfconsciously treated their students with a respect which the students returned.

The school was small, only 330 students, and seemed yet smaller because it was broken up into three teams which led rather independent lives. The teachers who complained of the principal's strong control and felt belittled by the demand to transform their teaching with or without adequate supplies and training, often also praised the principal because they believed that "she really cares about the kids". Even some of the teachers who were halfway won over to the position of the dissidents modified or prefaced critical comments about the principal with the strong qualifier that they respected her for caring about the students' welfare. These comments were a reflection of the teachers' values as well as the principal's behavior.

The principal at Adams had worked with the faculty for four years prior to the school's transformation into a magnet school. The school had been opened to serve as an annex to an overcrowded inner city junior high school using a building that had previously been rented out to a private school. The principal had a newly gathered and very young group of faculty to work with in this setting. She apparently influenced them to share her values concerning respect for all students and the value of establishing positive social relationships with them. When the school was transformed into a magnet serving students from all over the city agreement between the principal and most of the teachers upon the importance of establishing constructive social relationships with students, even though it was a tacit and unrecognized agreement, blunted the teachers' negative reaction to the principal's introduction of the IGE innovation and to the hierarchical stance and peremptory style she adopted in enforcing its implementation.

At Mann there was also a faculty culture developed from the school's past before it became a magnet school. But this faculty, or at least its white members, faced with an economically poor and academically unskilled black clientele had developed a culture in opposition to the students rather than in harmony with them. This faculty culture seemed to center around the idea that it was impossible for teachers to work effectively with such difficult students. They therefore had an argument to justify withdrawal from psychic engagement with the teaching task or the students. According to this understanding of the nature of teaching, since the students seemed indifferent and hostile, they could put in their day's work without worrying too much about the result and still feel they were in

essence good teachers. This faculty culture had also held that it was impossible for teachers to work effectively without an efficient and supportive administration, and the administrations of the school were never seen to live up to these criteria. Thus the faculty culture provided shared beliefs which allowed the teachers' to preserve their self-concept as good teachers in difficult circumstances without their having to see good results from their efforts.

The school had been moved into a different building (with the staff and students intact) in the second year of the magnet program, a year before the study. It now had a gifted and talented program and a select student body. If the student body did not quite live up to its name, it was still superior to that in the other middle schools of the city both in the academic qualifications of its students and their social background and willingness to be cooperative. Nonetheless, the dissident group in the faculty made much of the academic diversity which remained and the failure of the student body to live up to its gifted and talented label. They claimed once more that they could not be effective teachers with such an imperfect student body.

They similarly judged that the new administrators they had received were unable to create the conditions necessary for effective teaching. This faculty which was accustomed to using student and administrative shortcomings as an explanation for their own withdrawal of effort, continued to do so. They reacted extremely critically to the imposition of stronger hierarchical direction than they were used to. It was all the more striking that a larger proportion of the Mann faculty sharply resisted the administrators because at Mann the program was so vaguely defined that administrative directives interfered little with teachers' accustomed methods of teaching. Directives and conflicts centered more around what might be expected to be less symbolically loaded issues, primarily the logistics of running the school, matters such as obtaining supplies, keys to rooms, and permission for field trips. (The school was much larger than Adams and the building also housed a high school so that the logistical task was more complex and more rigidity was therefore introduced).[1]

The group who were virulently critical of the administration was much larger at Mann than at Adams. At Adams the values of the faculty culture gave teachers reasons to be supportive of her unrelated to the changes in the principal's new role and behavior in implementing the innovation, while at Mann the faculty culture provided both a motive and a justification for opposing the principals there.

These findings suggest the importance of identifying and understanding subcultures which grow up in organizations. These may run along the same lines as administrative values and so support them, or they may run independently or in opposition to administrators' values and aims. Directives passed down the formal hierarchy have a much better chance of being followed and relations between superordinates and subordinates are much more likely to remain cordial where

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1. It should be noted that the study took place in the second year of this arrangement, but in the third year of the magnet program at Adams which all participants agreed was proceeding far more smoothly than the second year.

subcultural values of subordinates agree with those of superordinates.

Once more ethnography is a crucial tool for understanding these processes. Subcultures are rarely explicitly articulated, especially when they run counter to administrative values. The teachers at Adams were unaware that they were unusual in their respect and caring for students, even difficult students. They took their attitudes and the practices which expressed them for granted as the natural ones any teachers would hold. To perceive the distinctiveness of their behavior and the part it played both in their relations with students and with the principal it was necessary to listen to their long comments and their conversations together about students--and to know something of how parallel discussions proceed at other schools with similar student bodies. Similarly teachers did not say explicitly that they were willing to tolerate peremptory behavior in the principal and the imposition of IGE because she stood for other values they found important—though one teacher in a special interview focused around teacher-principal relations came close to saying that. Rather they said that they respected the principal for her caring for the students and they displayed such caring themselves in the classroom and in team discussions. In separate contexts they spoke of the imposition of IGE and the principal's demanding style as being difficult to deal with but most considered this a problem to be lived with, even if not liked, and did not join the really angry dissidents. Analysis of the kind made here requires juxtaposing these separate themes of behavior, each of which can itself only be understood based on the collection of complex and varied data.

Similarly, the dissident teachers at Mann never said in so many words that they believed effective teaching could only be done with optimal students and administrators, but they did convey that meaning indirectly through long discursive comments in interviews which cumulatively could be interpreted as making that point. They ignored the high skills and homogeneity of the student body compared to others in the city and complained of the difficulty of teaching effectively because they found the student body diverse and not uniformly gifted. The most critical teachers spoke far more kindly now of their previous administrators than other teachers said they had at the time. Once more, the interpretation given here relies upon varied evidence which is a summary of behavior and many lengthy spontaneous verbalizations.

The Importance of Individual Needs. Finally, teachers' attitudes toward the principals seemed to serve their individual needs, though these individual needs were expressed through the collective understandings of the faculty subcultures. At Adams teachers felt a sense of efficacy in teaching as they maintained good relations with students. This sense of efficacy seemed to foster teachers' willingness to cooperate with one another, to spend extra time on their jobs at least where there was a clear benefit to students, and to withstand the assault to their dignity of the peremptory hierarchical introduction of IGE by the principal.

It seemed that when the Mann faculty had worked with an inner city student body, they had been unable to develop either cordial or constructive relations with students. Their faculty culture was centered around preserving their sense that they were good teachers anyway, by affirming that good teaching was not possible without co-operative students and administrators who cleared the teachers' paths of obstacles from discipline or logistical snarls. They probably maintained this culture

when the school was given a gifted and talented student body not simply out of inertia but as a protection in the face of highly critical parents of gifted and talented students who were mistrustful of the skills of a faculty who had been teaching inner city students.

There was an intriguing further element in the relations of the teachers with the administrators. The dissidents at both schools, but especially at Mann, were primarily men. At Adams this pattern was probably supported by the fact that the principal was a woman and that men in our culture are unaccustomed to being subordinate to women; so that her assumption of especially forceful exercise of her hierarchical powers was doubly insulting to their pride.[2]

Interestingly, it was at Mann that gender seemed the most important. There was a clear split between the men and the women who had shared a common faculty culture under the old conditions with an inner city student body. It was the women who straightforwardly said they felt the principals were highly directive but had little understanding of the daily difficulties they experienced and little appreciation for their efforts. The men never mentioned these issues, but complained that administrators had weak control over students or other teachers and blamed them for various logistical snarls or policies they found unreasonable.

Even more telling was their attitude toward an assistant principal who functioned as administrator in charge of the middle school while the principal oversaw the whole school but had direct responsibility for the high school which shared the building. The faculty were supposed to relate to the administrator in charge like a principal; he ran faculty meetings and dealt with parents individually and in meetings as a principal would. Still, he was formally an assistant principal and so subject ultimately to the authority of the principal. The dissident male faculty responded to this person with scorn because of his position; they referred to him with demeaning terms such as "flunky" which implied servitude and a lack of masculinity. It seemed that he earned these epithets primarily by fulfilling his formal role as second in command in a way clearly demanded by the the formal definition of roles in the school. The teachers appeared to be expressing their feeling that subordination to bureaucratic hierarchy was demeaning to their status as adult males by insulting this person's masculinity for doing his job as a subordinate. There is evidence (Stinchcombe, 1964; Willis, 1977) that when students fail in their academic role, they turn to their gender roles for a sense of adulthood. Unemployed and underemployed men also exaggerate their masculinity as a claim to high status (Liebow, 1967; Rubin, 1976). These teachers who did not feel effective in the classroom in either their previous or present setting may also have been unusually aware of their masculine independence as a last source of a feeling of personal power. Our stereotype of the adult male in this society runs very differently from our image of the faithful subordinate in a bureaucracy. This

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2. Furthermore, she was black and the dissidents were uniformly white; the same logic applies to race. But the dissident teachers occasionally referred to her gender, making such comments as that women just could not be forceful enough to be principals. Only the leading dissident made reference to her race, saying that it was the reason she was given the job.

contradiction could well bear further exploration as a source of resistance to bureaucratic hierarchy in many settings.

Once again this is a topic which does not lend itself to direct inquiry through closed-ended interview schedules or questionnaires. In reply to even a subtly phrased item which asked, in effect, "Is your masculine pride threatened by having to accept direct hierarchical commands?" every respondent would check "No" or else question the reasonableness of the question. If it seems credible to the reader that persons can act out of defense of their sense of masculinity in the context of action in an organization, then the only way to investigate the question is to note such matters as which situations lead to conflict and what kinds of language are used in describing persons, tasks, and relationships.

Jesse Owens School-Principal-Faculty Accord

The third school included in this study, Jesse Owens Open Education school, provided a contrast to the other two. The open education program of the school had been developed by the principal and curriculum co-ordinator working closely together and by the teachers themselves. Most of them had taken workshops and read the writings of a particular proponent of open education. Starting four years before the advent of desegregation and of magnet schools, the school departed from common patterns for middle schools in the district in several important respects, such as the subjects required, the organization of instruction in subjects, and the daily time schedule. The school had had to mount campaigns with the central office and board to be allowed to make these departures and the staff had come to see themselves as an embattled band struggling to develop a unique education in the face of a lack of understanding of their purposes and philosophy. With the coming of desegregation and magnet schools Jesse Owens gained in legitimacy and became an exemplar instead of a maverick.

Though the school experienced difficulties with the beginning of the plan, because it was moved into a different building, inherited much of that building's staff, and served a greatly enlarged student body, it did not have the experience of having an innovation thrust upon it in haste. The principal was perceived as the school's leader in interpreting the innovation to the central office, not the central office's agent in bringing innovation into the school.

The faculty culture which predominated in the school centered around open education and the advantages which teachers believed it to offer. Most teachers worked with a group of students in a self-contained classroom and enjoyed knowing them in a more wholistic way than they could in classrooms where they met them only for one period a day in one subject. Many developed informal cooperation with other teachers and it was a frequent event for teachers to observe one another in action. Most teachers had a high sense of efficacy based in the distinctive qualities of the open education approach, the solidarity of the teacher group, and the positive relationships they built with most students. In this context, the principal presented various commands issuing from central office about school

procedure as matters which simply had to be lived with but he did not necessarily claim to like them. The principal was accepted among the faculty in a way that the principals at the other two schools would not have been. He frequently walked into classrooms without warning on errands of various sorts; the children responded with a nonchalance which suggested that his presence was routine. He met regularly with the equivalent of teaching teams where his presence was received as unremarkable by most teachers. In this way he actually supervised teachers far more closely than most principals and had a clearer idea of what they were doing on a day to day basis, but with few exceptions the teachers did not experience his presence as supervision, or as onerous. Instead they praised him for being visible in the school building and available to students and teachers.

However, during the year of the study pressures began mounting for the program to present a more standardized set of experiences. Because the school was having difficulty attracting sufficient numbers of white children and keeping its standardized test scores up, it was under a great deal of pressure to comply for the sake of its survival. The principal was gradually having to impose more and more dictates on the teachers and more and more standardization on the program, some of which was at odds with its basic philosophy. When I returned to the school with a chapter describing it a year after the study, the principal was speaking in a far more hierarchical fashion of his relations with teachers. A teacher whom I met in the community also described a more hierarchical relation and expressed discomfort with it. This principal was being pushed by hierarchical relations with his superiors to lessen the distinctiveness of the school's program and to do so using the hierarchical powers of his office. He appeared to be beginning to receive some of the negative reaction received by the other principals as they used the same powers.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper I have emphasized the ways in which ethnographic studies, others' and my own, have been important in showing the ways in which actual practice in organizations departs from the rational model. However, I have said that at both Adams and Mann many teachers, clearly a majority at Adams and probably that at Mann, complied with the principal's hierarchical orders and admitted their legitimacy, even if they felt offended by them. Even the bitter dissenters at each school minimally complied in most respects, despite their questioning of the principal's legitimate right to the powers of the office. In short, then, this ethnographic study suggests that the rational model of organizational life corresponds to an important reality, even if to one which is more limited than the model in its pure form allows. In our enthusiasm to show the limits of a rational model of organization, we must not neglect to show the force it does have.

With regard to the applicability of a rational model of organization to schools, we must conclude that the glass is only half empty and therefore half full. Theories of organizations as rational die hard in part because the public believes in the rationality of organizational life. Sociologists are part of that public. The public legitimacy of organizational hierarchy is probably also its greatest source of practical power and efficacy.

The interesting theoretical question then is not, "Is a rational model a good

representation of the functioning of organizations (or of schools in particular)?", but "In what ways do organizations (schools) function according to a rational model and in what ways is that model limited by other sources of action?" The alternative models of organizational functioning described at the beginning of this chapter, especially loose coupling and anarchy, fasten more upon the absence of processes assumed in a rational model than upon active processes which resist it. In this paper I have explored influences in the lives of some schools and of the individuals who staffed them which led them actively to resist the formally legitimate demands of the hierarchically arranged organization. If we grant that these school organizations were reasonably typical and that most organizations generally do conform in some part to the rational model, then the interesting questions center around the tensions and counter forces which limit the rational model.

I have suggested several sources of resistance to the practice of a rational model in schools, which probably carry validity in other organizations staffed by semi-professionals, or for that matter in street-level bureaucracies more generally. First, I have suggested that both the shaky claims of semi-professional status to professional autonomy and customs of granting such autonomy informally, in schools through the closed classroom door, limit the real powers of members of the official hierarchy. The relative strength of the formal hierarchy and of these claims to autonomy is always problematic because the claims for autonomy have less formal legitimacy even though they may be crucial to the occupational self-concept and consequent dedication of organization members.

Second, I have argued that in the two schools where principals used their hierarchical powers to the limit, these powers carried great legitimacy. Teachers could not say the principals had no right to make the demands they did, no matter how offensive to their pride they may have found them. However, the legitimacy inhered in the office, not in the person. If the teachers as subordinates could prove incompetence on the part of the person filling the office to their own satisfaction, then the legitimacy of the commands the person gave did begin to come under suspicion. The incompetence of the individual broke the link between the specific command and the legitimacy of the office. I suggest as a hypothesis to be explored that where subordinates have reason to resist the powers of hierarchy either because of its tension with other definitions of their roles or for other reasons, they may find it hard to attack the legitimacy of the office and instead turn to character assassination to deauthorize its occupant. If this hypothesis is correct we should find that succession of individuals in offices where powers are informally resisted will do little to solve conflicts which subordinates may explicitly phrase almost solely in terms of the weaknesses of the incumbent.

I have also drawn attention to the development of subcultures among the faculties of individual schools. These subcultures can socialize their members to basic values concerning education and to agreement over the nature of children of the age (or social class or race) which they teach, and to understandings of what makes a good teacher. It is crucially important that these shared understandings may never be articulated as abstract propositions. They can only be understood as participants make many more specific statements and engage in specific actions in which the more general perspectives can be seen to be underlying assumptions. Clearly if this faculty subculture makes assumptions which are consistent with the goals which members of the school hierarchy are trying to promote, they will be

far more cooperative with that hierarchy and far more appreciative of the qualities of its members than they will if the premises of the faculty subculture and the administrative hierarchy are at odds.

Such subcultures grow up in part in response to the needs and ideas of their members in interaction with the situations in which organization members commonly find themselves. In teaching, where much research tells us that the intrinsic rewards of believing oneself to have done a job well are important (Biklen, 1982; Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975: McPherson, 1972), teachers are likely to need to feel that they are efficacious in their work and perhaps also that they are respected by others for that work. Administrators who can enhance those feelings will generate far more spontaneous cooperation than administrators whose directives are perceived by teachers to undercut such rewards, or--as at Mann--to undercut their defenses against the lack of such rewards. The more general point is that one must look to the effects of policies advanced by a formal hierarchy upon the needs of the individuals who must carry them out. These needs may be considered on an individual basis but may be more salient where they have been expressed and institutionalized through the values of a faculty subculture, or an equivalent subculture in other kinds of organizations.

Finally, and this was the point of departure for this paper, I have argued that processes such as those I have discussed require the methods of ethnography to bring them to public consideration. The influences on the organization I have discussed are ones that are not granted legitimacy or which reside outside of the participants' full awareness. In either case they will be expressed only through action and in lengthy and unguarded speech, and often indirectly even in these contexts. Especially when the researcher is learning what processes to look for, that is when he or she is attempting to extend theory, ethnography is by far the most effective method through which to learn.

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